

DEDICATION

WHEN I began "The Song of the Stone Wall," Dr. Edward Everett Hale was still among us, and it was my intention to dedicate the poem to him if it should be deemed worthy of publication. I fancied that he would like it; for he loved the old walls and the traditions that cling about them.

As I tried to image the men who had built the walls long ago, it seemed to me that Dr. Hale was the living embodiment of whatever was heroic in the founders of New England. He was a great American. He was also a great Puritan. Was not the zeal of his ancestors upon his lips, and their courage in his heart? Had they not bequeathed to him their torchlike faith, their patient fervor of toil and their creed of equality?

But his bright spirit had inherited no trace of their harshness and gloom. The windows of his soul opened to the sunlight of a joyous faith. His optimism and genial humor inspired gladness and good sense in others. With an old

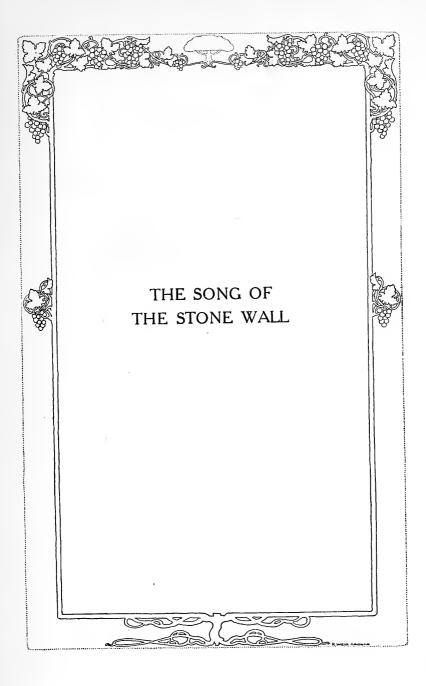


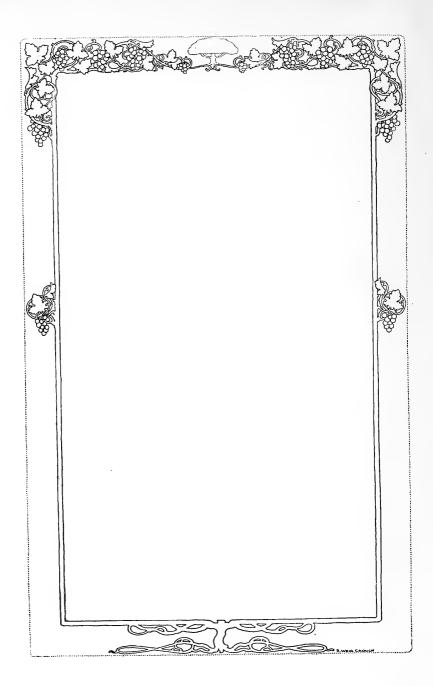
story he prepared their minds to receive new ideas, and with a parable he opened their hearts to generous feelings. All men loved him because he loved them. They knew that his heart was in their happiness, and that his humanity embraced their sorrows. In him the weak found a friend, the unprotected, a champion. Though a herald and proclaimer of peace, he could fight stubbornly and passionately on the side of jus-His was a lovable, uplifting greatness which drew all men near and ever nearer to God and to each other. Like his ancestors. he dreamed of a land of freedom founded on the love of God and the brotherhood of man. a land where each man shall achieve his share of happiness and learn the work of manhood to rule himself and "lend a hand."

Thoughts like these were often in my mind as the poem grew and took form. It is fitting, therefore, that I should dedicate it to him, and in so doing I give expression to the love and reverence which I have felt for him ever since he called me his little cousin, more than twenty years ago.

HELEN KELLER

Wrentham, Massachusetts, January, 1910.







Come walk with me, and I will tell

What I have read in this scroll of stone;

I will spell out this writing on hill and meadow.

It is a chronicle wrought by praying workmen,

The forefathers of our nation-

Leagues upon leagues of sealed history awaiting an interpreter.

This is New England's tapestry of stone

Alive with memories that throb and quiver

At the core of the ages

As the prophecies of old at the heart of God's Word.

The walls have many things to tell me,

And the days are long. I come and listen:

My hand is upon the stones, and the tale I fain would hear

Is of the men who built the walls,

And of the God who made the stones and the workers.

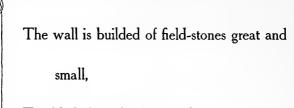
With searching feet I walk beside the wall;
I plunge and stumble over the fallen stones;
I follow the windings of the wall
Over the heaving hill, down by the meadow-

Over the heaving hill, down by the meadowbrook,

Beyond the scented fields, by the marsh where rushes grow.

On I trudge through pine woods fragrant and cool

And emerge amid clustered pools and by rolling acres of rye.



Tumbled about by frost and storm,

Shaped and polished by ice and rain and sun;

Some flattened, grooved, and chiseled

By the inscrutable sculpture of the weather;

Some with clefts and rough edges harsh to the touch.

Gracious Time has glorified the wall

And covered the historian stones with a

mantle of green.

Sunbeams flit and waver in the rifts,

Vanish and reappear, linger and sleep,

Conquer with radiance the obdurate angles,

Filter between the naked rents and windbleached jags.

I understand the triumph and the truth
Wrought into these walls of rugged stone.
They are a miracle of patient hands,
They are a victory of suffering, a pæan of
pain;

All pangs of death, all cries of birth,

Are in the mute, moss-covered stones;

They are eloquent to my hands.

O beautiful, blind stones, inarticulate and dumb!

In the deep gloom of their hearts there is a gleam

Of the primeval sun which looked upon them

When they were begotten.

So in the heart of man shines forever

A beam from the everlasting sun of God.

Rude and unresponsive are the stones;

Yet in them divine things lie concealed;

I hear their imprisoned chant:-

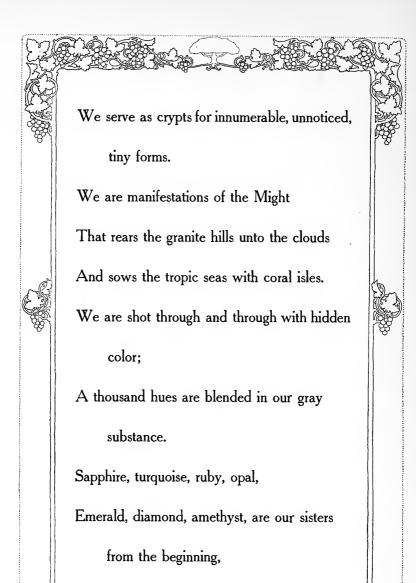
"We are fragments of the universe,

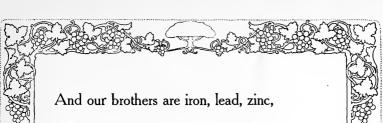
Chips of the rock whereon God laid the foundation of the world:

Out of immemorial chaos He wrought us.

Out of the sun, out of the tempest, out of the travail of the earth we grew.

We are wonderfully mingled of life and death;





Copper and silver and gold.

We are the dust of continents past and to come,

We are a deathless frieze carved with man's destiny:

In us is the record sibylline of far events.

We are as old as the world, our birth was before the hills.

We are the cup that holds the sea

And the framework of the peak that parts the sky.

When Chaos shall again return,

And endless Night shall spread her wings upon a ruined world,

We alone shall standup from the shattered earth,

Indestructible, invincible witnesses of God's

eternal purpose."

In reflective mood by the wall I wander;

The hoary stones have set my heart astir;

My thoughts take shape and move beside me
in the guise





Of the stern men who built the wall in early olden days.

One by one the melancholy phantoms go stepping from me,

And I follow them in and out among the stones.

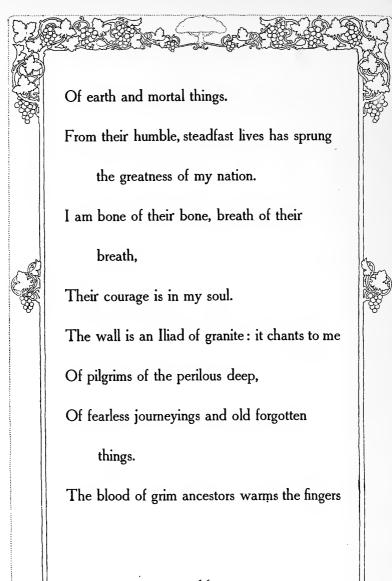
I think of the days long gone,

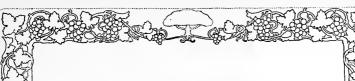
Flown like birds beyond the ramparts of the world.

The patient, sturdy men who piled the stones

Have vanished, like the days, beyond the

bounds





That trace the letters of their story;

My pulses beat in unison with pulses that are stilled;

The fire of their zeal inspires me

In my struggle with darkness and pain.

These embossed books, unobliterated by the tears and laughter of Time,

Are signed with the vital hands of undaunted men.

I love these monoliths, so crudely imprinted

With their stalwart, cleanly, frugal lives.

From my seat among the stones I stretch my hand and touch My friend the elm, urnlike, lithesome, tall. Far above the reach of my exploring fingers Birds are singing and winging joyously Through leafy billows of green. The elm-tree's song is wondrous sweet; The words are the ancientest language of trees-They tell how earth and air and light Are wrought anew to beauty and to fruitfulness. I feel the glad stirrings under her rough bark;

Her living sap mounts up to bring forth leaves;

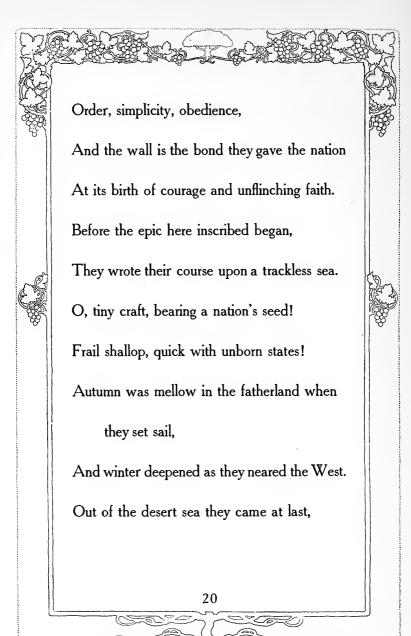
Her great limbs thrill beneath the wand of spring.

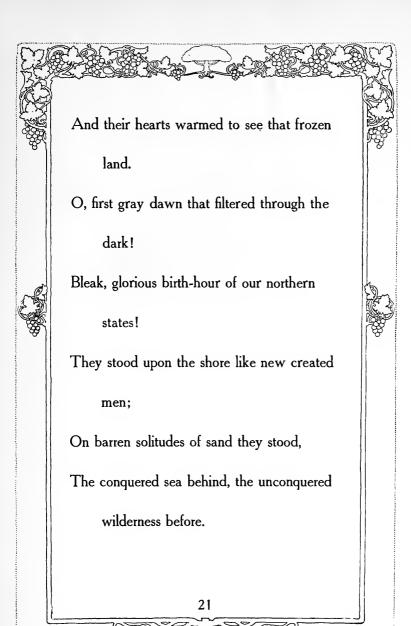
This wall was builded in our fathers' days—

Valorous days when life was lusty and the land was new.

Resemble the walls the builders, buffeted, stern, and worn.

To us they left the law,





Some died that year beneath the cruel cold,

And some for heartsick longing and the pang

Of homes remembered and souls torn asunder.

That spring the new-plowed field for bread of life

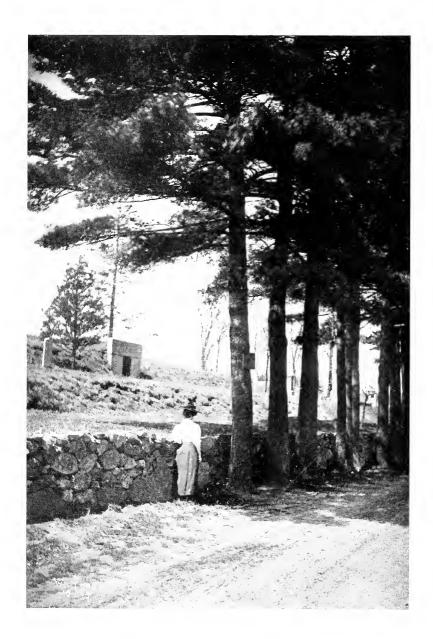
Bordered the new-dug acre marked for death;

Beside the springing corn they laid in the

sweet, dark earth

The young man, strong and free, the maiden, fair and trustful,

The little child, and the uncomplaining mother.





Across the meadow, by the ancient pines,

Where I, the child of life that lived that spring,

Drink in the fragrances of the young year,

The field-wall meets one grimly squared and straight.

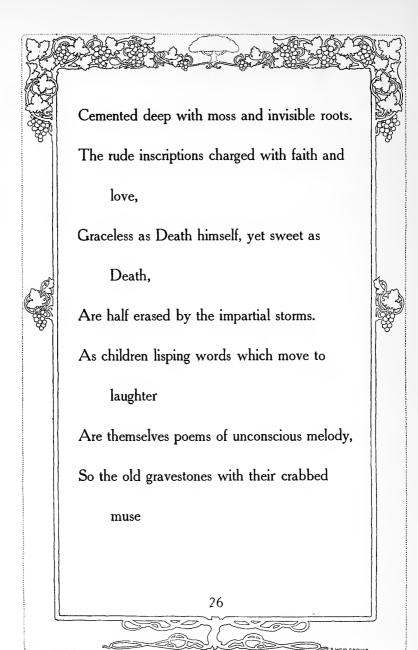
Beyond it rise the old tombs, gray and restful,

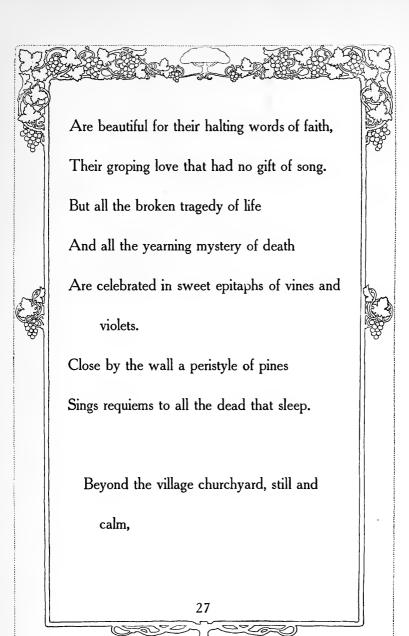
And the upright slates record the generations.

Stiffly aslant before the northern blasts,

Like the steadfast, angular beliefs

Of those whom they commemorate, the headstones stand,





Steeped in the sweetness of eternal morn,

The wall runs down in crumbling cadence

Beside the brook which plays

Through the land like a silver harp.

A wind of ancient romance blows across the field,

A sweet disturbance thrills the air;

The silken skirts of Spring go rustling by,

And the earth is astir with joy.

Up the hill, romping and shaking their golden heads,

Come the little children of the wood.

From ecstasy to ecstasy the year mounts upward.

Up from the south come the odor-laden winds,

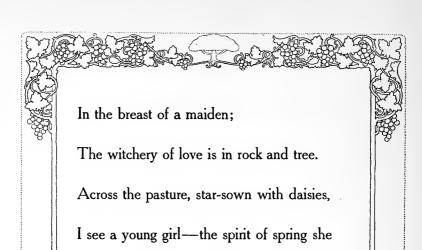
Angels and ministers of life,

Dropping seeds of fruitfulness

Into the bosoms of flowers.

Elusive, alluring secrets hide in wood and hedge

Like the first thoughts of love

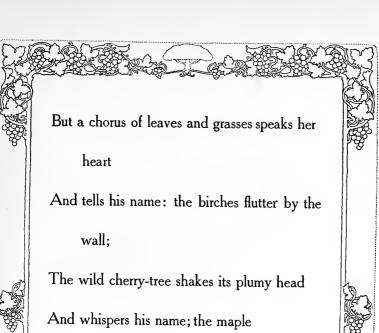


Sister of the winds that run through the rippling daisies.

seems,

Sweet and clear her voice calls father and brother,

And one whose name her shy lips will not utter.



And whispers his name; the maple

Opens its rosy lips and murmurs his name;

The marsh-marigold sends the rumor

Down the winding stream, and the blue flag

Spreads the gossip to the lilies in the lake:

All Nature's eyes and tongues conspire

In the unfolding of the tale

That Adam and Eve beneath the blossoming rose-tree

Told each other in the Garden of Eden.

Once more the wind blows from the walls,

And I behold a fair young mother;

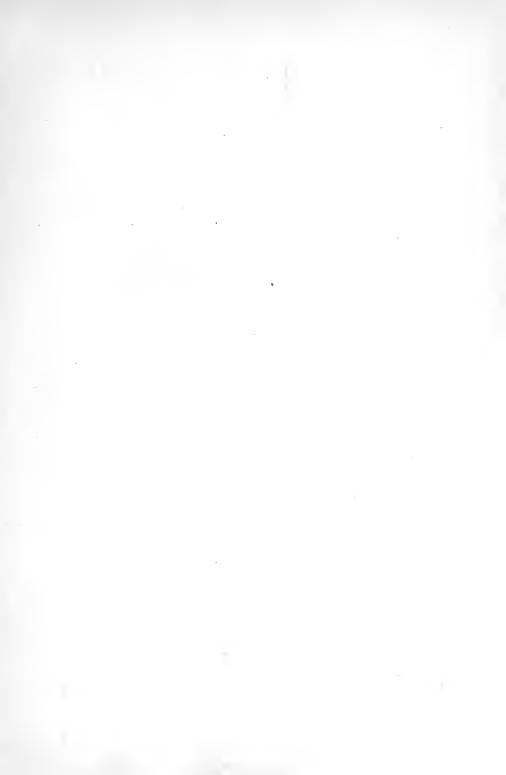
She stands at the lilac-shaded door

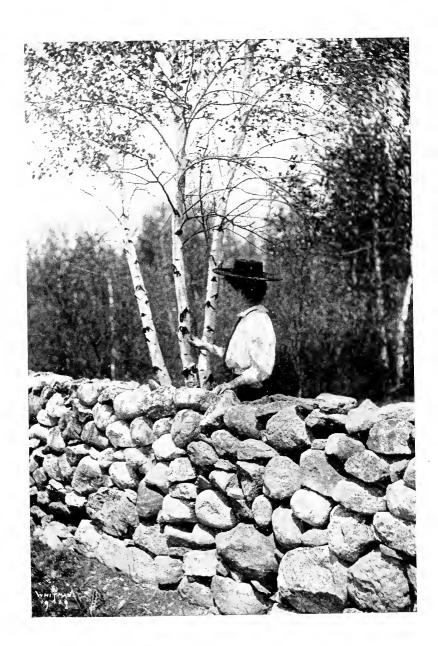
With her baby at her breast;

She looks across the twilit fields and smiles

And whispers to her child: "Thy father

comes!"





Life triumphed over many-weaponed Death.

Sorrow and toil and the wilderness thwarted their stout invasion;

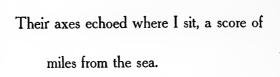
But with the ship that sailed again went no retreating soul!

Stubborn, unvanquished, clinging to the skirts of Hope,

They kept their narrow foothold on the land,

And the ship sailed home for more.

With yearlong striving they fought their way into the forest;



Slowly, slowly the wilderness yielded

To smiling grass-plots and clearings of yellow

corn;

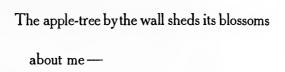
And while the logs of their cabins were still moist

With odorous sap, they set upon the hill

The shrine of liberty for man's mind,

And by it the shrine of liberty for man's soul,

The school-house and the church.



A shower of petals of light upon darkness.

From Nature's brimming cup I drink a thousand scents;

At noon the wizard sun stirs the hot soil under the pines.

I take the top stone of the wall in my hands

And the sun in my heart;

I feel the rippling land extend to right and left,

Bearing up a receptive surface to my uncertain feet;

I clamber up the hill and beyond the grassy sweep;

I encounter a chaos of tumbled rocks.

Piles of shadow they seem, huddling close to the land.

Here they are scattered like sheep,

Or like great birds at rest,

There a huge block juts from the giant wave of the hill.

At the foot of the aged pines the maiden's moccasins

Track the sod like the noiseless sandals of Spring.

Out of chinks in the wall delicate grasses wave,

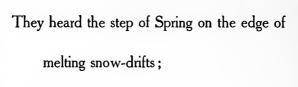
As beauty grew out of the crannies of those

hard souls.

Joyously, gratefully, after their long wrestling

With the bitter cold and the harsh white

winter,



Gladly, with courage that flashed from their life-beaten souls,

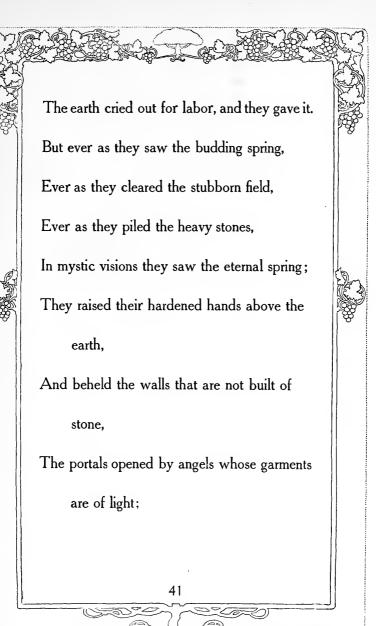
As the fire-sparks fly from the hammered stone,

They hailed the fragrant arbutus;

Its sweetness trailed beside the path that they cut through the forest,

And they gave it the name of their ship Mayflower.

Beauty was at their feet, and their eyes beheld it;



And beyond the radiant walls of living stones

They dreamed vast meadows and hills of
fadeless green.

With weather-beaten front, like the furrowed face of an old man,

In the old house across the road

The lights are out forever, the windows are broken,

And the oaken posts are warped;

The storms beat into the rooms as the passion of the world





Racked and buffeted those who once dwelt in them.

The psalm and the morning prayer are silent.

But the walls remain visible witnesses of faith

That knew no wavering or shadow of turning.

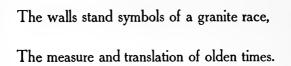
They have withstood sun and northern blast,

They have outlasted the unceasing strife

Of forces leagued to tear them down.

Under the stars and the clouds, under the summer sun,

Beaten by rain and wind, covered with tender vines,



In the rough epic of their life, their toil, their creeds,

Their psalms, their prayers, what stirring tales

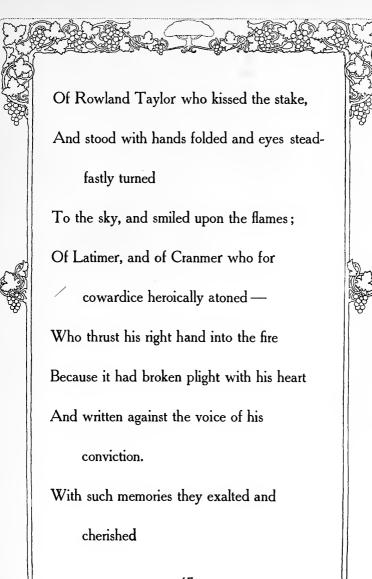
Of days that were their past had they to tell

Their children to keep the new faith burning?

Tales of grandsires in the fatherland

Whose faith was seven times tried in fiery

furnaces,—



The heroism of their tried souls,

And ours are wrung with doubt and self-

distrust!

I am kneeling on the odorous earth;

The sweet, shy feet of Spring come tripping o'er the land,

Winter is fled to the hills, leaving snowy wreaths

On apple-tree, meadow, and marsh.

The walls are astir; little waves of blue

Run through my fingers murmuring:

"We follow the winds and the snow!"

Their heart is a cup of gold.

Soft whispers of showers and flowers

Are mingled in the spring song of the walls.

Hark to the songs that go singing like the wind

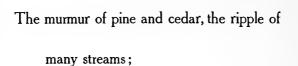
Through the chinks of the wall and thrill the

heart

And quicken it with passionate response!

The walls sing the song of wild bird, the

hoof-beat of deer,



Crows are calling from the Druidical wood;

The morning mist still haunts the meadows

Like the ghosts of the wall builders.

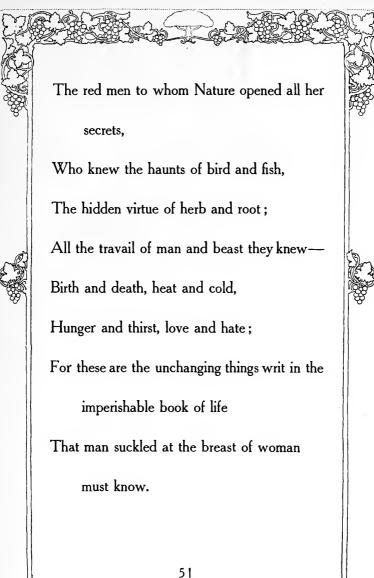
As I listen, methinks I hear the bitter plaint

Of the passing of a haughty race,

The wronged, friendly, childlike, peaceable

tribes,

The swarthy archers of the wilderness,



In the dim sanctuary of the pines

The winds murmur their mysteries through

dusky aisles—

Secrets of earth's renewal and the endless cycle of life.

Living things are afoot among the grasses;

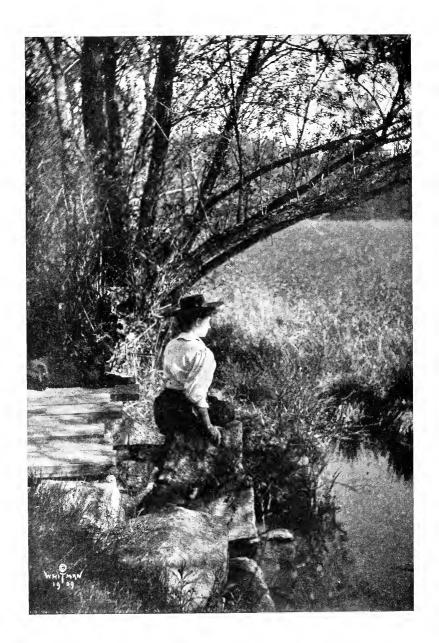
The closed fingers of the ferns unfold,

New bees explore new flowers, and the brook

Pours virgin waters from the rushing founts of May.

In the old walls there are sinister voices-





The groans of women charged with witchcraft.

I see a lone, gray, haggard woman standing
at bay,

Helpless against her grim, sin-darkened judges.

Terror blanches her lips and makes her

confess

Bonds with demons that her heart knows not.

Satan sits by the judgment-seat and laughs.

The gray walls, broken, weatherworn oracles,

Sing that she was once a girl of love and

laughter,

Then a fair mother with lullabies on her lips,

Caresses in her eyes, who spent her days

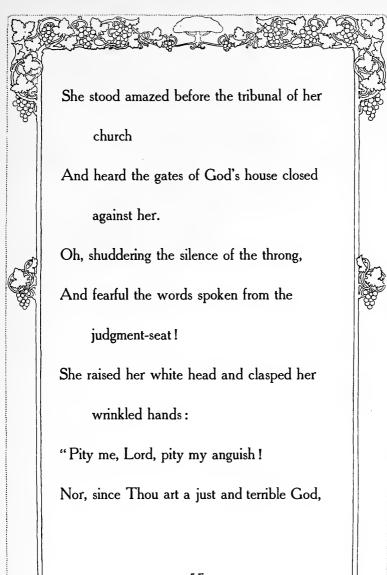
In weaving warmth to keep her brood against
the winter cold.

And in her tongue was the law of kindness;
For her God was the Lord Jehovah.

Enemies uprose and swore her accursed,

Laid at her door the writhing forms of little children,

And she could but answer: "The Evil One
Torments them in my shape."



Forget to visit thy wrath upon these people;

For they have sworn away the life of Thy

Who hath lived long in the land keeping Thy commandments.

I am old, Lord, and betrayed;

By neighbor and kin am I betrayed;

A Judas kiss hath marked me for a witch.

Possessed of a devil? Here be a legion of devils!

Smite them, O God, yea, utterly destroy them that persecute the innocent."

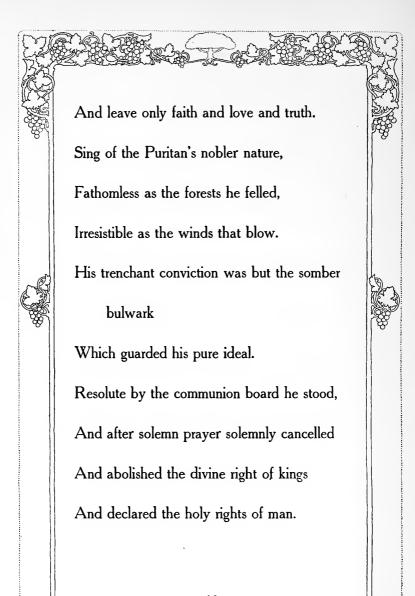
Before this mother in Israel the judges cowered;

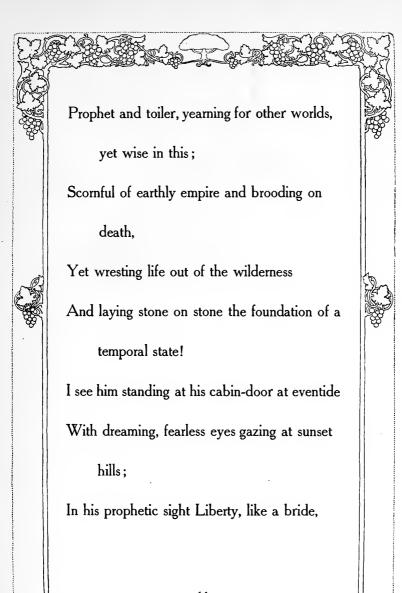
But still they suffered her to die.

Through the tragic, guilty walls I hear the sighs

Of desolate women and penitent, remorseful men.

Sing of happier themes, O many-voiced epic,
Sing how the ages, like thrifty husbandmen,
winnow the creeds of men,





Hasteth to meet her lord, the westward-going man!

Even as he saw the citadel of Heaven,

He beheld an earthly state divinely fair and just.

Mystic and statesman, maker of homes,

Strengthened by the primal law of toil,

And schooled by monarch-made injustices,

He carried the covenant of liberty with fire

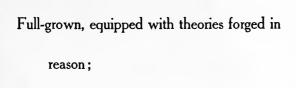
and sword,

And laid a rich state on frugality!

Many republics have sprung into being,







All, all have fallen in a single night;

But to the wise, fire-hardened Puritan

Democracy was not a blaze of glory

To crackle for an hour and be quenched out

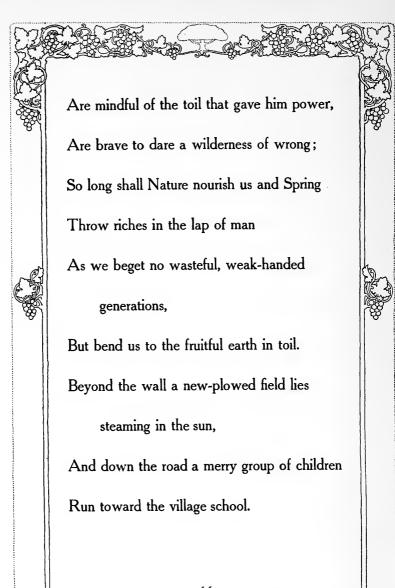
By the first gust that blows across the world.

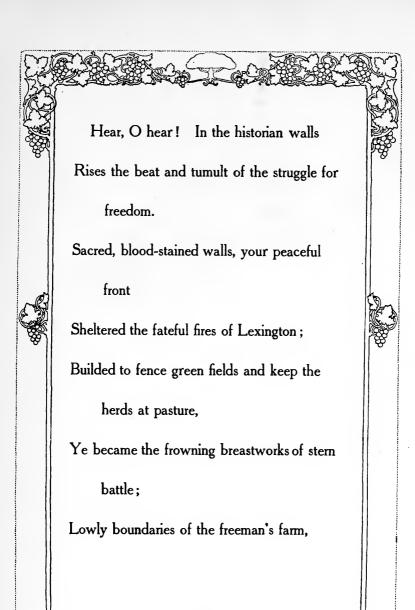
And all his dreams are true as when he dreamed them;

I see him standing at his cabin-door,

But only shall they be fulfilled if we

65





Ye grew the rampart of a land at war;

And still ye cross the centuries

Between the age of monarchs and the age

When farmers in their fields are kings.

From the Revolution the young Republic emerged,

She mounted up as on the wings of the eagle,

She ran and was not weary, and all the

children of the world

Joined her and followed her shining path.

But ever as she ran, above her lifted head

Darkened the monster cloud of slavery.

Hark! In the walls, amid voices of prayer and of triumph,

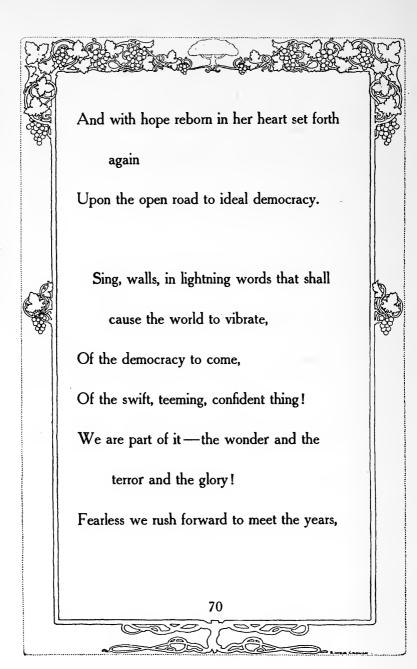
I hear the clank of manacles and the ominous mutterings of bondmen!

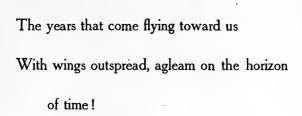
At Gettysburg, our Golgotha, the sons of the fathers

Poured their blood to wash out a nation's shame.

Cleansed by tribulation and atonement,

The broken nation rose from her knees,





O eloquent, sane walls, instinct with a new faith,

Ye are barbarous, incongruous, but great with the greatness of reality.

Walls wrought in unfaltering effort,

Sing of our prosperity, the joyous harvest

Of the labor of lusty toilers.

Down through the years comes the ring of their victorious axes:

"Ye are titans of the forest, but we are stronger;

Ye are strong with the strength of mighty winds,

But we are strong with the unconquerable strength of souls!"

Still the young race, unassailable, inviolate,

Shakes the solitudes with the strokes of

creation;

Doubly strong we renew the valorous days,

And like a measureless sea we overflow

The fresh green, benevolent West,

The buoyant, fruitful West that dares and sings!

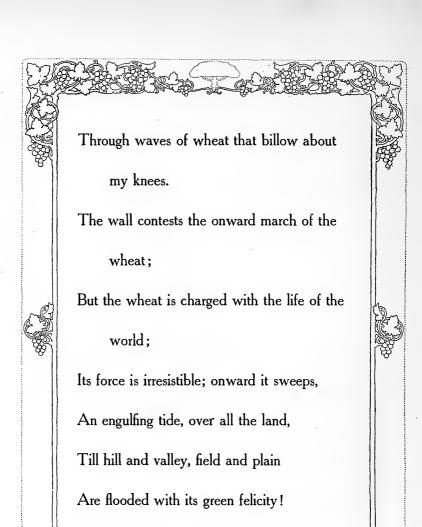
Pure, dew-dripping walls that guard

The quiet, lovable, fertile fields,

Sing praises to Him who from the mossy
rocks

Can bid the fountains leap in thirsty lands.

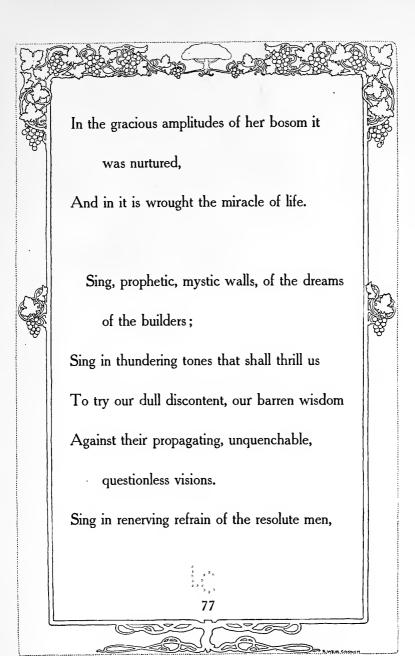
I walk beside the stones through the young grain,



Out of the moist earth it has sprung;







Each a Lincoln in his smoldering patience,

Each a Luther in his fearless faith,

Who made a breach in the wall of darkness

And let the hosts of liberty march through.

Calm, eternal walls, tranquil, mature,

Which old voices, old songs, old kisses cover,

As mosses and lichens cover your ancient

stones,

Teach me the secret of your serene repose;

Tell of the greater things to be,

When love and wisdom are the only creed,

And law and right are one.

Sing that the Lord cometh, the Lord cometh,

The fountain-head and spring of life!

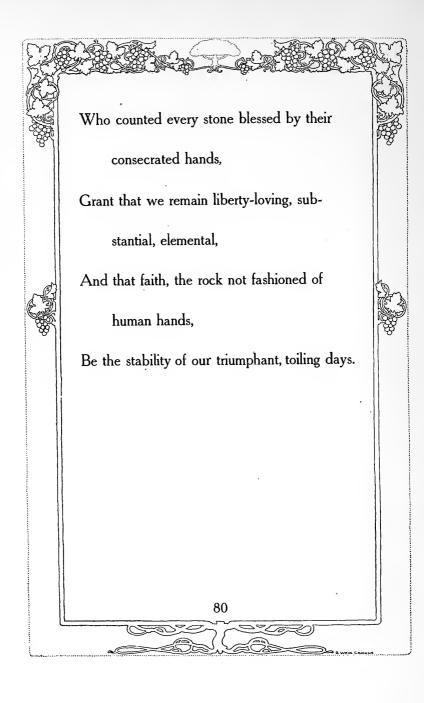
Sing, steady, exultant walls, in strains hallowed and touched with fire,

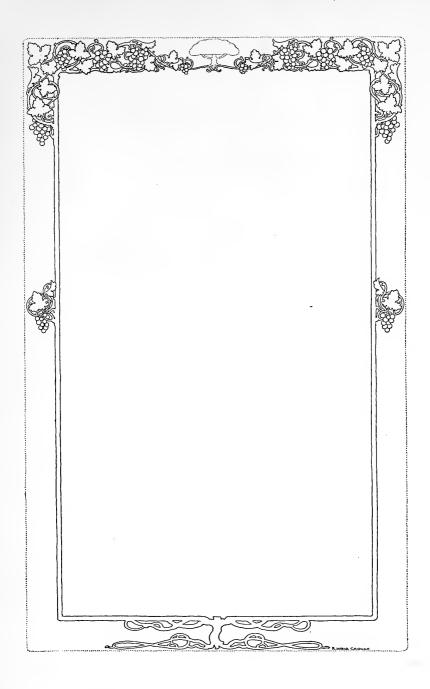
Sing that the Lord shall build us all together,

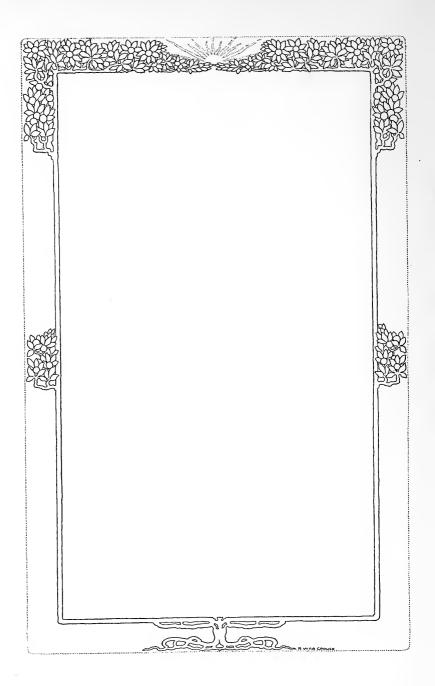
As living stones build us, cemented together.

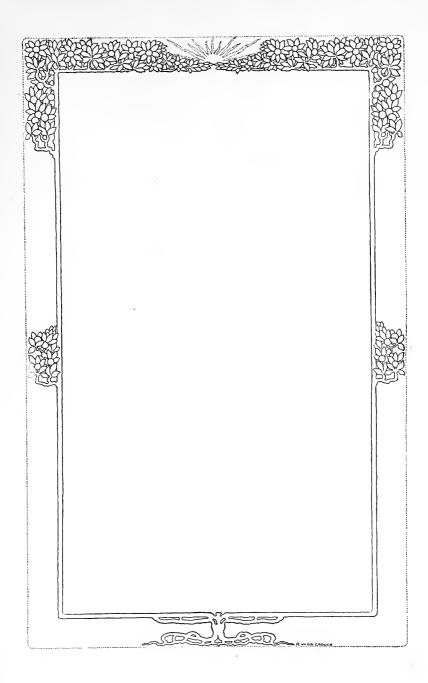
May He who knoweth every pleasant thing

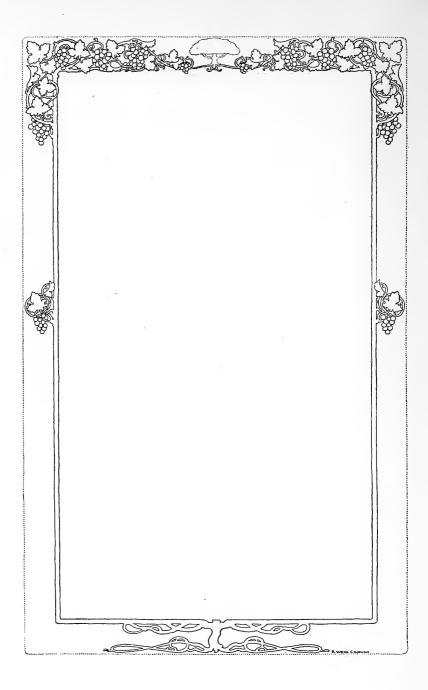
That our sires forewent to teach the peoples law and truth,

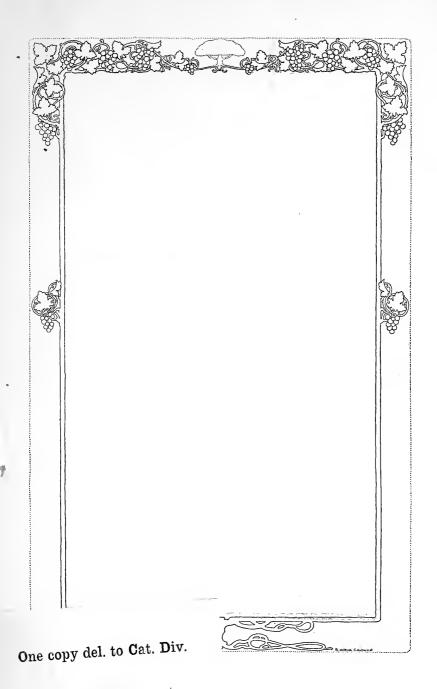












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